



**American Association  
of Community Colleges**



## NIACC JPEC Incubator Awarded Mott Foundation Grant

The NIACC JPEC Business Incubator was recently awarded a Mott Foundation Grant to help develop the concept of a virtual incubator, a business incubator unlimited by space. NIACC was one of ten colleges across the nation selected for this honor. The AACCC initiative was recognized in a White House announcement on January 31 as an example of creative entrepreneurship to be encouraged by the new StartUP America Partnership “to celebrate, inspire and accelerate high-growth entrepreneurship throughout the nation,” as part of the Obama Administration’s national innovation strategy.

The idea of a virtual incubator recognizes that incubation and business assistance services do not need to be confined to a traditional brick-and-mortar facility. Through a virtual incubator, NIACC JPEC staff and partners can deliver services and information at a business location, meeting the client/industry where needed through hybrid (face, time and technology) mechanisms. In particular, virtual incubation facilitates the emergence of multiple new businesses in geographically isolated, depressed and hard-to-serve communities and increases access for the people who most can benefit from their results. This project will expand the services of the North Iowa Business Incubator and the NIACC JPEC.

The initial phase of work funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation on virtual incubators at community colleges was recently completed by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) Center for Workforce and Economic Development (the Center). The Center conducted initial research to review existing incubation models and promising practices and develop tools for promoting and replicating the model.

As a second phase of the virtual incubator idea, ten colleges were selected to identify successful and unsuccessful commercialization strategies, programs, products, and services designed to enhance college capacity and competitiveness. The ten colleges already have demonstrated significant infrastructure, relationships, resources and innovation in the brick and mortar (and/or virtual) incubator field with a history of supporting new businesses. Each of these colleges will receive a two-year, \$107,500 grant for staff time, travel and materials to expand and develop implementation practices for virtual incubators and other fee-for-service businesses. The colleges, chosen by AACCC, the Mott Foundation, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE, an AACCC affiliate), include:

- North Iowa Area Community College, Mason City, IA
- Rio Salado College, Phoenix, AZ
- Long Beach Community College, Long Beach, CA
- Mott Community College, Flint, MI
- Southeast Community College, Lincoln, NE
- White Mountain Community College, Berlin, NH
- Burlington County Community College, Burlington, NJ
- Santa Fe Community College, Santa Fe, NM
- Lorain County Community College, Elyria, OH
- Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Green Bay, WI

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An AACCC representative said, “This is a pivotal moment [in our history]. The successful, creative stimulation of new economic growth represents the best and only hope in many stressed labor markets. In an age driven by technology and information, a new idea or a new business can be delivered anytime, anywhere. Similarly, “blended” and “hybrid” learning models expand options to expedite and ground learning. By piloting this effort now, colleges can leverage federal, state and local funding for the purpose of reinvigorating community businesses as part of their mission for years to come.”



## USA CLASSES

Upcoming classes for the Ultimate Sales Academy® include:

### Add-On Sales

Through this two-day session, participants will learn the concept of Add-On Sales and how this technique can improve client equity and client loyalty. Participants will learn the psychology of Add-On Selling and identify opportunities within their business. They will develop specific scripts for identified Add-On sales opportunities and role play their product opportunities.

Add-On Sales will be offered at NIACC - Mason City, IA on February 21 and 22, 2011. Course # 76607.

### USA Six Figure Selling Skills

The Ultimate Sales Academy was created to teach selling as a profession, with the focus of developing the skills and disciplines necessary to be a top sales producer. The emphasis of The Ultimate Sales Academy is on business-to-business selling. Over 80% of the program is participant action based with video, critical self-assessment and group evaluation. USA Six Figure Selling Skills will be offered at NIACC - Mason City, IA- March 7-9, 2011. Course # 76574.

Register for either class by calling NIACC Continuing Education at (641) 422-4358 or 1-888-466-4222 ext. 4358.

## Director's Notes

In recent years, businesses have been under attack at the federal level due to failures and abuses on Wall Street and in the auto and home mortgage industries. The rhetoric aimed at businesses has had an impact on college students considering majoring in business. The constant drumbeat against corporate America has an effect on main street businesses as well, as all business is considered in the same light.

Fortunately, entrepreneurs have begun to be set apart from some of the general negative perceptions about corporate America as they demonstrate a way out of the recession. People are beginning to see the roles that start-up and small businesses play in the employment of Americans and as the growth engine for America.

In *The Importance of Startups in Job Creation and Job Destruction*, economist Tim Kane documented that **net** job growth occurs in the U.S. economy only through start-up firms. While older firms lose 1 million jobs annually, new firms add an average of 3 million jobs in their first year. Find details at [www.kauffman.org](http://www.kauffman.org) under the *Research and Policy* tab, or contact the NIACC JPEC for a copy. Kane found that during recessionary years, job creation by start-ups remains stable while net job losses at existing firms are highly attuned to the business climate and cycle. This means entrepreneurs and start-up businesses are the primary engines of job creation, and thus have attracted the attention of government officials as a key path to recovery.

Although most start-up businesses fail at a fairly high rate with much of the job growth in the first year, a few start-ups, called "gazelles", grow at a vibrant rate and account for sustained jobs over a number of years. At the NIACC JPEC, we have had success in reversing the trend of failure of start-up companies in the early years through programs and counseling. In 2007, we found over 78% of the businesses started since 1997, when the NIACC JPEC opened, *and* which had used NIACC JPEC and/or FastTrac® programs, were still in business. While we expect that number has changed recently due to the economy, this tells us if we are to be successful in job growth we must increase the number of start-up companies and continue the ongoing counseling and support. In other words, we must create more new jobs to retain more jobs and businesses.

Although the NIACC JPEC works with both start-up and established companies, this article focuses on start-up firms as the engine for growth. The City of Mason City recently challenged us to develop an idea to help small microenterprises grow. Why? Because over 80% of the businesses in Mason City and the surrounding area have 5 or fewer employees. That is a huge number and if we can help those businesses expand, it will have a profound impact on employment in the area. While we don't know how this microenterprise initiative will fare in the budgeting and implementation process in Mason City and elsewhere in North Iowa, we hope it will gain traction and have a lasting impact on the success and growth of the small businesses in North Iowa.

In addition, with the support of the NIACC JPEC, there is no reason that start-up businesses should not be attracted to our area. The comprehensive programs developed by the NIACC JPEC have received national recognition and are becoming state and national models. We must aggressively market North Iowa as the best place to start or grow a business, with the support of the NIACC JPEC and other community partners.

I am excited about the future of North Iowa. If we can get the word out and continue to improve and implement new support programs for entrepreneurs and small businesses, I believe we can turn North Iowa into a vibrant growth part of the state. NIACC and the NIACC JPEC are here to help and are committed to helping North Iowa grow. Give us a call and let us help you with your new or existing business today.



Jamie T. Zanios  
NIACC Vice President  
& JPEC Director

## Entries Accepted for the John Pappajohn Iowa Business Plan Competition

Entries are being accepted for the 2011 John Pappajohn Iowa Business Plan Competition. The competition is designed to stimulate business development, to support outstanding business ideas, and to encourage entrepreneurs with start-up seed money, as well as highlighting entrepreneurial activity within Iowa.



A total of \$50,000 will be awarded to the top three submitted business plans (\$25,000 for first place, \$15,000 for second and \$10,000 for third). The first round, open from March 1 to April 30, is when businesses can submit executive summaries online via Angelsoft. Visit [www.iowabusinessplancompetition.com](http://www.iowabusinessplancompetition.com) for a link to the Angelsoft website.

Between May 20 and July 1, selected companies will be invited to submit full business plans. After review, seven to ten companies will be selected to present their business plan to the judges. After presentations are complete, three finalists will be notified. Each finalist will prepare a fifteen minute presentation to be given at the Iowa Venture Capital and Entrepreneurs Conference (IVCEC) in Des Moines on October 25. Winners will be announced following the presentations.

During the 2010 Iowa Business Plan Competition, Cabin Coffee Franchising Inc., owned by Brad and Angie Barber of Clear Lake, was selected for honorable mention in the contest. Brad Barber said, "The contest was a great experience! I really appreciate the Pappajohn Center and the support they provide to area businesses."

Assistance with business plan entries is available at any Pappajohn Center or SBDC around Iowa. Contact the NIACC JPEC for information.

### *NIACC JPEC Staff*



The NIACC JPEC team members include (back row, left to right), Tim Putnam, NIACC JPEC Associate Director; Mark Olchefske, Incubator/Accelerator Director; Ted Bair, SBDC Director; and Jamie T. Zanos, NIACC Vice President and JPEC Director. Front row, left to right: Kelley Crane, School Partnership Entrepreneurial Coordinator; Mary Spitz, Administrative Assistant, NIACC JPEC and SBDC; and Linda Rourick, Administrative Assistant, NIACC Business Incubator.

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### *2011 FastTrac® Courses*

#### **FastTrac® LaunchPad™**

is a FREE introductory session (2 hours) for those interested in FastTrac who need more information.

- March 24, 2011 at the Titonka Savings Bank community room in Forest City. Sessions from 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.
- March 29, 2011 at the Lake Mills Chamber Development Corporation office in Lake Mills. Sessions from 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.

Call (641) 422-4358 to register for any of these sessions.

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**FastTrac® NewVenture™** assists the start-up entrepreneur in developing a business concept and evaluating it through each step of the business planning process. This is a course designed to teach participants how to research, develop, and write detailed start-up business plans which can be used to create successful businesses.

- Mondays in Forest City (Thorson Hall at Waldorf) and Thursdays in Lake Mills (Lake Mills High School computer room) from April 7 through May 12. 6:00 - 9:30 p.m. Course BUS-143-N002.

Register for this FastTrac® course by calling (641) 422-4208.

## Two New Businesses Open in North Iowa Business Incubator

Space is filling up at the North Iowa Business Incubator on the NIACC campus with two new businesses, one led by students, joining the entrepreneurial community.

PSF Design, a vinyl graphics and web design business, is led by NIACC students Kevin Breister and Luke Benjamin. PSF Design is focused on helping businesses advertise their products and services as well as helping individuals with their vinyl graphic needs.

"PSF Design prides itself in providing quality vinyl graphics and web design services at a fair price," said Breister. "If your business needs a sign or vehicle graphics, check into PSF Design. Vehicle graphics are a great promotional tool that can transform your vehicle into a driving billboard and can help your business stand out from the competition. PSF also helps businesses that are in need of a professional looking website."

Brad McGee started Mason City Installation Services, an electronic installation business, four months ago at the incubator. McGee said, "At Mason City Installation Services, we specialize in the installation of high tech electronics and other specialty items in homes and businesses."

In addition, Mason City Installation Services will also do contract installation work for retailers in the area, including routing computer cables and other low voltage control systems throughout a house or building. McGee chose to locate in the North Iowa Business Incubator due to the expertise and support available there, and he said that working with Mark Olchefske, Incubator/Accelerator Director, and Ted Bair, SBDC Director, has been invaluable for someone trying to launch a new business.

"Even in times of economic uncertainty, businesses can be started and grown," Olchefske said. Entrepreneurs that identify a real need in the marketplace, and are able to fill that need, can be successful regardless of economic conditions.

"Breister, Benjamin and McGee have each identified underserved niches with significant growth potential. Certainly there are challenges ahead in executing their respective strategies, but successfully overcoming those obstacles is part of owning your own business," said Olchefske.

Limited space is still available in the North Iowa Business Incubator for start-up businesses. For more information, contact the NIACC JPEC at (641) 422-4384 or [incubator@niacc.edu](mailto:incubator@niacc.edu).

### 17 Students Graduate from FastTrac® NewVenture™

Congratulations to the graduates of the Fall 2010 FastTrac® business course. The entrepreneurs, from nine different North Iowa and Southern Minnesota communities, completed FastTrac® NewVenture™, a ten-week "business boot camp" designed to help new business people develop their business concept and business plan. As part of the curriculum, FastTrac® NewVenture™ graduates go through all the steps in developing a business plan including feasibility, marketing, insurance and financing.

The graduates and their hometowns include:

Albert Lea – Phillip Hafstad  
Britt - Karin Baker  
Clear Lake – Keith Arndt; Benjamin Bergman  
Dows – Deb Killoren  
Mason City – Sandi Lincoln; Teresa Logan; Kim Marovets; Mark Miller; Donna Lee Olson  
Nora Springs – Josh Eckert  
Northwood – Levi Hanson; Mary Jo Porter  
Osage – Lisa Eichmeier; Renae Mauser; Jessica Voight  
St. Ansgar – Bridgette Beyer



#### Fall 2010 FastTrac® Graduates

*Back row from left to right: Donna Lee Olson, Mary Jo Porter, Renae Mauser, Philip Hafstad, Jessica Voight, Bridgette Beyer, Keith Arndt, Levi Hanson*

*Front row from left to right: Mark Miller, Deb Killoren, Lisa Eichmeier, Teresa Logan, Sandi Lincoln, Karin Baker and Benjamin Bergman. Not pictured: Josh Eckert and Jeff Killoren.*

# Excel Business Solutions Awarded NanoLoan



David Ries (center), owner of Excel Business Solutions receives a NanoLoan from NIACC Accelerator / Incubator Director Mark Olchefske (left) and Ted Bair, SBDC Director (right).

David Ries, owner of Excel Business Solutions, wants to become the leading provider of document management solutions in the Midwest. He was recently awarded a NanoLoan from the NIACC JPEC.

Ries said, "The NanoLoan helped us to take care of the small business expenses we did not initially think of when starting our business such as purchasing accounting software, sales laptops, and the expenses associated with incorporation. We also used some of the money for travel expenses related to training that was required by Xerox. We didn't figure these expenses into our initial business plan, but the NanoLoan helped us to accomplish these things."

"David has done an enormous amount of research and planning and is well positioned to execute his plan and achieve success," stated Ted Bair, SBDC Director. Excel Business Solutions is located at 202 1st Street SE, Suite 105 in Mason City. The company can be reached by

phone at (641) 424-8101 or on-line at [www.excelbsolutions.com](http://www.excelbsolutions.com).

The NanoLoan Program targets a specific, underserved segment of the entrepreneurial community: businesses in the 'pre-bankable' phase. NanoLoans up to \$2,500 can be used for prototype development, patents, equipment, working capital and other start up costs. NanoLoan applicants are required to successfully complete the FastTrac® New Venture™ course. Contact the NIACC JPEC for more information on NanoLoans.



**John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center**  
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## Youth Entrepreneurial Academy



Area high school juniors and seniors are invited to apply for the NIACC JPEC's Youth Entrepreneurial Academy (YEA). The Academy will take place at the NIACC campus in Mason City from June 19-23. YEA is free for students and includes food and lodging. Space is limited to 25 students, and applications will be accepted until May 14th.

The Academy provides an opportunity for participants to be exposed to entrepreneurship, challenged to apply their skills and creativity, encouraged to develop critical thinking skills and have another career option of "being their own boss." Students who complete the Academy are awarded a \$500 scholarship to attend NIACC following their high school graduation.

To apply, students can contact their high school guidance counselors or call Mary Spitz at 641-422-4111 or email [spitzmar@niacc.edu](mailto:spitzmar@niacc.edu).

#### NIACC JPEC Advisory Board

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### *CEO Club Members Attend National Conference*

Fourteen NIACC students and alumni attended the Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization (CEO) conference in Chicago, Illinois last fall. During the conference, students learned about the entrepreneurial drive needed to manage a business and the rewards of business ownership.

The conference featured keynote speakers including:

- Jimmy John Liautaud, owner of the Jimmy John's sandwich shop franchise
- Chef Jacquy Pfeiffer, academic dean of The French Pastry School in Chicago
- Arel Moodie, inspirational speaker and founder of The College Success Program
- San Francisco Sheriff Michael Hennessy
- Omar Soliman and Jason Fried, owners of College Hunks Hauling Junk

Moodie advised conference participants, "Just jump!" in the very first keynote session. He and other keynote speakers encouraged participants to have the drive to achieve their goals and to grow and develop their business, whether just starting out or expanding. These points were illustrated through the everyday lives of the speakers, such as Jimmy John, who grew a small sandwich shop into the multi-billion dollar franchise it is today. This drive was also exemplified by conference participants who gave elevator pitches, three-minute presentations on their business ideas to a panel of judges. Winners of the elevator pitch contest won capital to invest in their future endeavors. Students had the chance to meet with business owners and entrepreneurs for one-on-one advice during breakout sessions. Through the CEO conference, the NIACC group gained valuable insight into entrepreneurship, and two of the participants even came back from the conference as business partners!



*NIACC CEO students pose with Jerome Katz, the author of their text book, "Entrepreneurial Small Business".*

*Front row, left to right: Abby Nolte, Alesha Floy, Blake Craw.*

*Back row, left to right: Luke Benjamin, Kevin Breister, Jerome Katz, Tim Putnam, Kathrine Kofoot, Krista Sanchez.*